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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a consciousness-raising group experience for high school students regarding male and female roles in our society. Participants are 10-12 high school students (with an equal number of male and female students) and a counselor who served as group facilitator. The program consists of 12 numbered cards on each of which is written a short descriptive statement of an issue related to the topic of sex roles. A student takes case #1 and reads it aloud to the group, then reacts to the issue raised. Once that student has finished, the other participants are invited to join in a discussion of the issue. The purpose of this group activity is to raise the awareness of both girls and boys to the issue of early sex-role stereotyping in our society. The 12 cards with their descriptive statements are included in this paper. (Author)

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C. R. 234

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(A Consciousness-Raising Group Activity
for use with *Level 2, 3 and 4 Students
in Canadian Schools)

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# THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN OUR SOCIETY

A Project Proposal
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* Grades 10, 11, 12

June 1, 1974

C. R. 234

A consciousness-raising group experience for level 2, 3 and 4 students in Canadian secondary schools.

## Purpose of the Group

To explore the issues relating to the role of men and women in our society.

## Time Required

Two three-hour sessions separated by a week or less.

## Number of Participants

Ten to twelve with an equal number of male and female students from grades 10, 11 and 12 and a counsellor who acts as a group facilitator.

## Group Formation

On a voluntary basis only.

## Method of Operation

The facilitator will introduce the nature of the workshop and describe how the objectives might best be met.

Twelve numbered cards will be introduced on which is written a short descriptive statement of an issue related to the workshop. A student will take card no. 1 and read it aloud to the group and then react to the issue raised. Once that student has finished, the other participants will be invited to join in a discussion of the issue.

## Notes to the Group Facilitator

The purpose of this group activity is to raise the awareness of both girls and boys to the issue of sex-role stereotyping in our society. The group experience should be seen as just that - an experience! The group experience is not intended to present one view or another but is to help students focus on the issues and in turn heighten their consciousness so that they may influence their own destiny as they move into a more equalitarian society.

It would be most valuable if you had undergone some consciousness-raising group work yourself. It would be helpful for you to read literature in the field of Feminist History or Women's Liberation e.g. Green, Firestone, Bardwick, et al.

Your role is to remain somewhat neutral and to help the students focus on the issues raised on the cards. Only one card is to be discussed at a time. Each should generate 15-20 minutes of discussion. If you never finish all the cards, don't worry, but do card 12 as the last one before the group dissolves. Let the group pace itself and make some decisions about how fast or into what depth it wishes to go.

As a facilitator you should establish a minimum number of ground rules regarding confidentiality etc. This ground rule has been found useful in group situations - 'Don't ask a question of someone that you are not prepared to answer yourself!'

The first six cards raise issues about the life of the student here and now. The issues raised are common to students today. The last six cards, which are discussed after a lapse of a week or less, are more global and societal in nature. They are concerned with advertising, work, marriage, career planning, and feedback.

A Caution

If the material in the project seems overpowering in terms of the facilitator's personal commitments to some of the issues raised, it is suggested that a group of counsellors (facilitators) first experience the workshop together.

Thanks is expressed to Ms. Pat Hall, Counsellor, A.Y. Jackson S.S., North York - Toronto who assisted in the preparation of the project materials.

Phil Manuel

June, 1974

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CARD NO. 1

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

One of the things we learn very early in life is to be a boy's boy or a feminine girl. Some of the toys I had as a kid were given to me, I guess, so that I could learn my lessons early. For example, who ever heard of giving a doll to a 3 year-old boy or a hammer and saw kit to a little girl? Here are some of the things that I can recollect about my childhood ...

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CARD NO. 2

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

I have sometimes wondered about the sports program in my last school. It seems that the boys played hockey and football and the girls played basketball and volleyball. When I think of it, sometimes I felt that it was more important for our boys team to win the championship than it was for the girls team to bring honour to the school. I wonder why this is so? Could it be that boys are better at sports than girls ...

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CARD NO. 3

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

When you think about our Canadian code of manners it becomes rather obvious that men and women have been assigned distinct roles. In fact, it seems that men are trained to react in certain ways to women, eg. opening a door for a girl, giving up a seat on the bus to a woman, etc. I wonder what effect these codes have on us in times of equality ...

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CARD NO. 4

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

When you look at our school in terms of what subjects the girls and boys take, an interesting pattern emerges. It seems to me that the boys seem to excel in Math and Science and often they avoid taking Art or Shorthand. In fact, I wonder if we sometimes think that a boy taking Shorthand is a bit "feminine" or a girl taking electricity is a bit too "masculine". In other words, it seems at times, that when we automatically assign roles to people, we in turn reveal our attitudes about sex-role stereotyping. Let me think for a moment about my attitudes on this issue ...

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CARD NO. 5

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

I know a few girls who are not planning to be anyone. Because they are going to be married someday they show little interest in planning a career. If they work after high school or college the job won't be as important to them as it is for the boys. When you think about it, it seems curious because many of the boys are going to be married too! ...

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CARD NO. 6

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

Girls seem to be more emotional than boys. I've never seen a boy in our school crying but I've seen girls cry, even in class. I wonder if that's just the way girls are ...

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CARD NO. 7

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

Why is it that in advertising and on T.V. in particular that women are made to look dumb? I mean who else gets all upset about a whiter-than-white wash than some keen housewife type? When you see men in advertising they appear to be strong, handsome, and successful and on the go. When I start to think about it, could it be that much of advertising is just one big put-on designed to keep us in our places?

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CARD NO. 8

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

How many women do you know that are lawyers? Not many I bet. Yet as you look at the world of work it sometimes seems that there are female jobs and male jobs. It's rather rare that a male is encouraged to go into nursing or a female is encouraged to plan for a career in the construction industry. This makes me wonder about just how many real choices I have open to me in terms of my working life. I wonder what it's like to be a female in a predominantly man's working world.

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CARD NO. 9

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

I read somewhere that more and more women are entering the labour market these days. In fact, it appears that 8 out of 10 women will be engaged in the work force over a period of 25 years. This period of time for many women will be interrupted for a 10-year period or so of child-raising. In terms of education I wonder what this means to the female student who is preparing for a meaningful and productive working life. I hear that many girls just want to get out of school, get married and have kids and that's that. I wonder if the girls in our school are seriously preparing for a working life of 25 years or more?

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CARD NO. 10

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

As I look at marriage today it seems to me that the roles of husband and wife are gradually changing. I once read of a man who decided to look after the kids while his wife, who was a career executive with a large department store, went out to work and earned the money to keep the family going. I wonder what type of relationship I should be looking for in the future if I decide to marry.

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CARD NO. 11

There is no message on this card. But don't tell anybody. Just raise an issue which is important to you or ask someone in the group a question to clarify a point raised earlier ...

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CARD NO. 12

(Imagine that this is you speaking and read this card aloud.)

In terms of the future this is what this workshop has meant to me ...

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